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Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.172/12
28 April 1994

Original: ENGLISH

Item 9 (d) of the provisional agenda*

# PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR INTERFACE

## From disaster management to sustainable development: How the public sector, private sector and voluntary organizations can work together

### Programme

The session on public and private sector interface has been organized by the World Health Organization (WHO).

### Objective

The session addresses national and international policymakers, financial institutions, donors and professionals involved in development and emergency management regarding policies, strategies and means that integrate disaster management within a sustainable development cycle.

No country is safe from the impact of major and complex emergencies, which are becoming more frequent and more severe. Since the 1980s, money and manpower for disaster relief has soared, yet we are no closer than before to bridging the humanitarian gap.

Today's predominant crisis solving-oriented approach to disasters is not sustainable. It creates cultures of dependency and triggers vicious cycles of underdevelopment. It upsets fragile ecosystems and leads to mass movements of people. It often drains scarce resources from local, national and international organizations which provide humanitarian assistance, without ensuring that disaster relief serves as a springboard for future sustainable development.

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* A/CONF.172/1.

In fact, sustainable development is not possible without addressing the damage to development wrought by disasters. Sustainable development has been defined as "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems." 1/ Because public health status is a key indicator in determining the level of sustainable development, because disasters cause large numbers of deaths, illness, injuries and disabilities, and because disasters destroy public health infrastructure and strain health personnel resources, the World Health Organization is seeking new ways to address the rising toll of disasters on society.

No one sector or organization, however, can do it alone. Disasters are by definition beyond the coping capacity of the stricken community. All parts of society are affected by disasters, and all have a role to play.

This session features leaders in business, government and voluntary organizations who outline their experiences related to disaster and development. Based on their experience, they offer a cost-effective, new paradigm for emergency management that is integrated into a cycle of sustainable development. 2/ The new paradigm is based on formal partnerships between all parts of society that build a "preventive culture" towards disasters. The emphasis is on disaster prevention, mitigation and emergency preparedness activities as an extension of ongoing development activities. Where emergencies occur, such partnerships provide an efficient means to reduce the impact of disasters, and ensure that recovery and rehabilitation activities lead to long-term sustainable development.

The speakers outline the elements needed to make this approach succeed: political will, public awareness, development of local and national resources, and strong cooperation between public, private and voluntary sectors. This cooperation must be based on clear division of responsibilities between the public, private and voluntary sectors: each has a role to play and the roles have to be complementary and efficiently coordinated. The speakers outline comparative advantages of their sectors in a disaster management partnership that fits within the framework of sustainable development, discuss constraints in achieving such a partnership, and offer constructive solutions that countries can adapt to their needs.

## Notes

1/ "Caring for the Earth", WWF, UNEP, IUCN, 1991.

2/ Incorporation of emergency management in the sustainable development cycle reflects WHO's position on international discussions of the relief-development continuum.

## Presentations

Introduction

An introductory statement will be made by a high-level official of the World Health Organization

Coping with disasters: a culture in Egypt

Professor M. Mahfouz, Chairman, Public Services Committee of the Shoura (Senate) Assembly and former Minister of Health, Egypt

Relationship between the public and private sector in emergency prevention and preparedness: the Italian experience

Ing. Carlo Presenti, Head of the National Department for Technical Services, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy

Role of non-governmental and private voluntary organizations in disaster reduction

Ms. Julia Taft, President and Chief Executive Officer, Interaction (United States of America)

Emergency management in Africa: a social responsibility

Mr. A. Tevoedjre, President, Centre africain de prospective sociales, member-designate, Scientific and Technical Committee, International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (Benin)

Partnership role of non-governmental organizations in a new disaster management paradigm

Ms. Marcia Feria-Miranda, Specialist in social marketing and partnership development (Philippines)

Cost of disasters: areas of cooperation with the insurance industry

Mr. Gerhard Berz, Head, Geoscience Research Group, Munich Reinsurance Company (Germany)

Role of the private sector in disaster management

Mr. R. Natarajan, President, Union Carbide Asia Pacific (Singapore)

Session commentator: Mr. K. Lyonette, Director, Conservation Policy, World Wide Fund for Nature